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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S., IRAN, TERRORISM, ISRAEL, GERMANY-
AFGHANISTAN;BERLIN

- ¶1. Lead Stories Summary
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- ¶5. (Israel) New Settlements
- ¶6. (Afghanistan) London Conference

- ¶1. Lead Stories Summary

Print media focused on the events in Iran (FAZ, Berliner Zeitung), the aftermath of the failed terrorist attack in the U.S. (taz) and the stock market index DAX crossing the 6,000 point level (Die Welt). Editorials focused on Iran and Foreign Minister Westerwelle's criticism of the upcoming Afghanistan conference. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast heute opened with a report on security controls at

airports, while ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with a story on violence in Iran.

- ¶2. Failed Terrorist Attack

All papers (12/29) carry reports of the discussion over new security

measures in air traffic. Bavaria's Interior Minister Joachim Herrmann

(CSU) told Bild: "If full-body scanners (German 'naked-scanner') would

increase security and not cause an intolerable violation of privacy,

then we must now reconsider introducing them." Frankfurter Allgemeine

cited several German politicians in an article under the headline:

"Warning Against Hasty Moves," and wrote: "CDU domestic policy expert

Wolfgang Bosbach said that the terrorist attempt 'is for us no

reason
to change security laws.' He told Berliner Zeitung that 'tougher
laws
do not help against human failure.' Bavaria's Interior Minister
Hermann also opposed tougher security laws. He said they are
"absolutely not necessary." Instead he criticized U.S. security
agencies saying that "great shortcomings happened again in the
United
States." He added that if security in air traffic is to be
increased
then this is "by no means a question of laws but of a better
implementation of existing laws." FAZ also cited a spokesperson for
the pilots' trade union "Cockpit" who criticized the new measures
implemented by U.S. security agencies as "total nonsense" and which
"have not been thought through." He added that a terrorist would be
able to carry out a terrorist attack one hour and five minutes
before
landing. Financial Times Deutschland headlined: "U.S. Admits
Security
Gap," and reported that "Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano
confirmed that the list of terror suspects had deficiencies."

ARD-TV's late evening newscast Tagesthemen (12/28) commented: "The
procedures on the ground before an aircraft can take off last longer

and longer: tougher controls, complaining passengers, even though
their security is concerned. To frisk everyone will create a

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Herculean task for airports. There won't be enough staff, and
sometimes even no space. In my eyes, this is doing things for the
sake of doing things, and it looks as if previous controls did not
create too much confidence. This is true: the controls for liquids,

for instance, are really absurd. Those who come from Asia and
transfer aircraft in Frankfurt will be taken away the liquid goods
they bought at duty free shops in Asia because German security
agencies do not recognize Asian security controls. The only
reasonable
proposal would be for me to use modern technology. This exists, for
instance, with full body scanners."

Under the headline: "Trivialities Govern the World," Financial Times

Deutschland (12/29) editorialized: "Now [after the failed terrorist

attempt], we hear everywhere that security measures must be
intensified among airlines, at airports, and from politicians. This

is always laudable and the reflex is more than understandable. But
in
their efforts to avoid an attack la Abdulmutallab, the security
regulators are going over the top. They are patching up arrangements

which are nerve racking for passengers but can easily be bypassed by

potential attackers. That is why the new measures for flights to
the
United States do not create a grain of greater security. To not do

anything after such an attack is not possible in view of the usual
spiral of hysteria. Let's take note of one fact: there will be
absolute security only if we board a plane without luggage and get
on
the plane naked but only after security experts have inspected all
our
body openings...."

According to Sueddeutsche Zeitung (12/29), "the gaps must now be
ferreted out which allowed the attacker from Detroit to slip
through.
But at the same time, all sides involved should beware of hysteria.

What a few airlines are now expecting the passengers to accept has nothing to do with security but with blind, hectic action. Instead we recommend learning the lesson from the failed terrorist attempt. The most important one is: ground controls must be improved. And greater security will exist only if there are more control inspectors and better technical devices. Greater security does not exist only in aircraft. To treat passengers like potential terrorists and monitor them per video even on the toilets will not result in anything but would probably violate human dignity. And this must also be respected by airlines."

Under the headline: "Obama's 9/11" Tagesspiegel (12/29) argued: "In the United States, all political camps know that the terrorist danger is a factor that can decide elections, even though the actors have only limited control over events. A bloody attack could cost Barack

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Obama his re-election even if he were successful otherwise. And the failed terrorist attack now offers a new opportunity to accuse Obama of being too soft on terrorism. First, Obama does not take the terrorist danger seriously. Second, he did not deliver a rousing speech but only ordered a few additional security measures, and, third, he does too little against those countries which plot attacks. The first two charges are easy to grasp for many Americans, even though they are not true when looking at the facts but the third aspect is totally wrong. Bush had neglected the war in Afghanistan because of Iraq. But Obama is taking it seriously. In Yemen, too, Obama does more than Bush to counter terrorist dangers. For some in Europe, Obama's policy towards Yemen probably goes too far, but in America he is rather running the risk of being considered too gentle in this respect, too."

13. (Iran) Clashes Between Regime and Opposition

Most papers (12/29) carried reports and analysis on the latest events in Iran. Sueddeutsche headlined; "Iran's Regime is Striking Back," Frankfurter Allgemeine carried a front-page report: "Iranian Regime Arrests Khatami and Moussavi aides - Unrest Continues." FAZ also carried a front-page editorial under the headline: "At a Turnaround," and wrote: "Only one thing can certainly be said about developments in Iran: the government is not succeeding in breaking the wave of protests that has affected the country since the controversial re-election of President Ahmadinejad...and it is by no means clear whether the opposition movement has or needs 'leadership,' or whether the protesters are organizing themselves by relying on the means of advanced technology. The regime does not have the tendency or the ability to implement reforms. But it has the decisive means of power: the military police and the revolutionary guards. But if it uses these weapons with all their brutality, the government will undermine its own legitimacy and possibly start a civil war."

In the view of Sueddeutsche Zeitung (12/29), "the regime will not

fall
that easily even if blood is shed on Tehran's streets. Broad and powerful classes are interested in the survival of the regime. They all have to defend their own power and economic privileges and will not surrender them only because unrest is making increasingly clear that they have lost legitimacy and popularity among the people. In addition, the protest movement does not have an organization or a leadership that is recognized by everyone: by critical religious leaders but also by many who want a different state."

Financial Times Deutschland (12/29) is of the opinion that "after the most recent clashes...it is clear that the regime is unable to end the

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unrest so easily by using force. On the contrary, after six months in which protests flared up again and again, large parts of the opposition look more determined today than ever before to oust the theocratic dictatorship. Over the past few days it has become clear that many demonstrators are willing to enter into a battle with the government's militia forces. The longer the confrontation lasts and the further it escalates, the more unlikely is a political solution, for instance, a deal between Ahmadinejad and the opposition."

Berliner Zeitung (12/29) judged: "Many Iranians, among them prominent supporters of the green opposition such as ex-President Khatami and opposition leader Moussavi currently only want a reform of the regime, not an abolition of the system. The majority are, and this is understandable, simply afraid of a violent coup, of chaos and bloodshed. Their country is an example of how revolutions can end, not in the way the majority of their participants want. When the Shah was ousted, it was nationalists and Trotskyites, anarchists and communists, Social Democrats and a strong women's movement that took part in the ouster. But they all got an Islamic Republic."

Regional daily Nrnberger Zeitung (12/29) observed: "For the first time since the beginning of the protests, the demonstrators have now massively defended themselves against the brutality of the militia forces. This reduces hopes for a gentle revolution and is all the more so because the reactions of the (still) powers-that be look increasingly panic-stricken. Khatami has already lost the support of the intelligentsia, the youth and thus the future. In addition, the merchants in the cities are getting nervous because they are selling less because of the protests. The about-face of the basaris resulted in the ouster of the Shah 30 years ago."

Regional daily Rhein-Zeitung of Koblenz (12/29) is of the opinion that "the brute force of the regime no longer deters protesters. This shows that the regime has lost its threatening potential and it can no longer pin its hopes on fears of repression in society. And any further escalation will weaken it ever more. Ahmadinejad no longer sits firm in his saddle."

14. (Terrorism) U.S.-Yemen

All papers (12/29) carry lengthy reports on the involvement of Yemen in terrorist activities and wrote that the U.S. government obviously offered the Yemenite government support in the bombing of alleged terror camps in Yemen between December 17 to 24 in which, according to Yemenite government sources, 60 terrorists died. FAZ reported that

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the bomb attacks were flown by Yemeni aircraft but "it is very likely that the Americans gave logistical assistance." Die Welt headlined a report: "America's New Terror Front" and wrote that the failed terrorist attack has "directed Washington's view at the powder keg in Yemen." Sueddeutsche headlined: "Net with Many Spiders" and wrote that "al-Qaida is especially thriving in Yemen and initiates attacks from there," while Financial Times Deutschland carried a report on U.S. activities in Yemen under the headline: "U.S. Opens New Anti-Terror Front [in Yemen]."

Financial Times Deutschland (12/29) carried an editorial under the headline: "The Lesser Evil," and reported: "The treatment of al-Qaida terror camps in Yemen is one of those things. The United States has now obviously thought of doing it wrong: It is no longer waiting for the Yemeni government to fight terrorists in the country but is now taking things in its own hands. For the first time it has not only supported attacks on terror camps with funds but also militarily. This is risky but the lesser evil. It is risky because any military attack can also kill civilians. This is reprehensible and will intensify the support of Yemenis for the terrorists. That is why the attacks in Yemen should remain what they are: the lesser of two evils but not the beginning of a new strategy."

15. (Israel) New Settlements

"Without Consequence" is the headline in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (12/29), which editorialized: "At the beginning of this month, Israel was successfully outraged at the fact that the draft resolution of the European foreign ministers included the phrase that a 'vital Palestinian state' also includes Eastern Jerusalem. The final draft had a different tone but in the matter itself, the EU did not give in. It does not recognize the annexation of the Arabic part of the city after the Six-Day war. That is why it is logical not to accept that the Israeli government is now waiting for tenders for the construction of seven hundred apartments in Eastern Jerusalem. For a long time, Prime Minister Netanyahu withstood President Obama's demand to stop all settlement activities before he offered a ten-month settlement stop on the West Bank. But this announcement was explicitly not valid

for Jerusalem. This shows: Netanyahu is not serious. He believes that his attitude will not have any consequences, apart from a few expressions of disapproval."

16. (Afghanistan) London Conference

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According to Frankfurter Allgemeine (12/29), Foreign Minister Westerwelle's threat not to attend the Afghanistan conference in London is "the kind of threat with which one can only expose oneself to ridicule. Westerwelle's absence would be a tough strike but the question is for whom. For the German government, which put forward the idea of a conference? Of course, the London conference must discuss civilian reconstruction but the FDP chairman will not be able to prevent a debate over future troop levels. Does he really think that President Obama will send additional tens of thousands of soldiers and then be satisfied with European platitudes? A discussion over an overall strategy can certainly take place - the coalition government certainly has the liberty to make such a move - if it knows what an overall strategy should look like. But the reference to 'a networked security' will not be enough."

DELAWIE